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769 which royal ancestors only can withhold; differences in the harvest
241 between one area and another are often attributed to fights between the
782 witches of the two areas, and even variations in yield between one man's field and his neighbour's may be due to witchcraft. Yet one finds in prayers many a request for a good harvest, even though there are no special ceremonies devoted to this end. A man pouring a libation for a sick child said among other things, 'Give us corn; when we plough let us also reap. Why are you stinting us?' And it is significant that the only regular religious observance is the harvest offering of beer made of each year's new corn in villages where there are shrines or dedicated animals.

• 764 When any one dies, there is thought to be danger that the fertility of the crops will depart with him or her. Hence, when a gourd of seeds of every kind is placed in the grave together with a firebrand and calabash of water for the journey, some of the seeds are scattered over the body with the words, 'Do not depart with all the corn and seeds,' and very often the grain belonging to the deceased is treated with medicine in order that it may remain fertile.

769 Above all, the ancestors complain, a fact which lies at the basis of
782 Lovedu religion, for by far the greater proportion of religious rites are those performed in response to ancestral complaints. One might at first think it strange that the gods, in life just ordinary, well-disposed people, should in death be so liable to bring trouble upon their kin. Sometimes it is thought to be a sign of love: when Masilu's grandmother had made him ill because she wanted a goat dedicated to her, his mother said, 'No wonder his *gogo* seized him. She was always so fond of him.' But chiefly it is the nature of ancestors to complain; as the Lovedu phrase it, 'When people sleep (i.e. are dead), they ought to complain' (*Hɛ vathu va khi lala fase va swanɖɛ hu vɛlɛala*). When there is illness, they are, as it is phrased, 'seen in the divining bones'; it is they who sometimes 'hold' the woman experiencing difficult childbirth, and sometimes, but far less than among the Nguni, their complaints cause dreams. Our close friend
787 Walter, coming to seek work in Johannesburg, dreamt disturbing dreams of his dead father, who appeared to say that he was needed at home. He thereupon returned home and, when he arrived, his mother took him to a doctor, whose bones declared that the dead father was annoyed at not having been told of the journey to town and had to be appeased (*hu phasa*). Walter was well educated, but he had failed in his last examination and felt doubly frustrated. He had great ambitions of reforming the political system of the tribe, from which his education had divorced him, and in town he was dissatisfied that nothing was open to him but the unskilled work of his uneducated compatriots.

769 An ancestor may complain about the way he has been buried, and if he
782 has died far from home, may demand to be 'brought back home' in a
778 ceremony in which, besides the dedication of a beast or goat, a goat is killed and eaten, its bones being buried as though it were a person. But this 'bringing home', involving the making of a shrine, applies only to those dying at a distance and does not resemble the 'bringing home' of the Zulu, among whom it is part of death ceremonial. At times the gods complain of neglect. But in the majority of cases no definite reason for

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In the actual working religion of the Lovedu the commonest and most conspicuous rite is *hu phasa*, consisting of a prayer and the pouring on to earth or *thugula* of a mixture of ground, sprouted grain and water, a mixture colloquially referred to as *mutaziwa lesclo* (the rinser of the winnowing basket). More rarely *hu phasa* is merely spitting out water in the courtyard to the accompaniment of such prayer. There is no formulated distinction in principle between the two forms; the Lovedu say that the dice decide which is to be used. We found water squirted in illness caused by complaints of the living; in some cases of difficult birth; where in the initiation of a possessed woman the spirit was begged to manifest itself; and in one exceptional instance water was squirted on the face of a corpse addressed in prayer before it was buried (usually the corpse is merely addressed when the grains are put into the grave). The efficacy of *hu phasa*, which is also used magically to render witchcraft ineffectual, appears to lie in its 'cooling' effect. *Hu phasa* is performed in connexion with a large number of cases of illness and bad luck and is the recognized approach in asking for blessings on a journey or an undertaking. Hardly a week passes without some one in the neighbourhood having to *phasa*, and generally the prayer in these cases takes the form of a 'scolding' (*hu rohana*), in which the spirits are asked why they are causing illness and told to be satisfied. One does not *phasa* without also using charms in the mixture to make the spirits forget, and the officiator may be male or female, whomsoever the dice have indicated. Rites of thanksgiving, except for the customary harvest beer, are almost unknown. We came upon such a rite only once when the bachelor brother of Madinji returned home after an absence in town of thirty years and she performed *hu phasa* in the presence of the family, saying, 'Spirits of Mambeuli, this is one of your fowls. We thought he was lost; now he is back. Keep him as you have kept the rest of us. If he goes away, let him soon remember and long for his home.'

The only regular offering is the annual harvest beer given to dedicated animals and shrines, though even this may be neglected: the village may be moved without the shrine, or the dedicated animal die without being replaced. We ourselves witnessed the setting up of a shrine and dedicated sheep after twenty years' neglect in the chief house of Sedena. Much more formal than ordinary rites of *hu phasa* is the harvest offering, which may take place any time between July and November, for there is here no rule that the queen should take precedence. The officiator is a woman where possible, the *khadi*, who is specially called to come, and real beer, called *muphaba* and made of eleusine, is prepared for the ceremony. If eleusine is not available, red kaffir corn (*makhaha*) may be used, but no other grain is acceptable to the spirits. In its preparation, which is in the hands of old women or girls below the age of puberty, care must be taken that the eleusine is stamped, not ground on the grindstone, and that none of it is tasted before the gods have been given some. Ordinary beer is tasted to see if it is ready, but *muphaba* is smelt or tested by stirring with a twirler. Though the married women of the village play no part in the religious rites on such occasions, it is the duty of the chief wife in whose courtyard the ceremony will take place to smear with dung the place

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village. It was the *zwiḍajani*, ancestral spirits come to join in the joy and revelry of the living. They opened the next song and joined in the singing of the women, all in the whistling language which people make out by its tone. Later more beer was brought out and when the *zwiḍajani* began a new song no one took any notice. 'If you are drinking beer, what are we to drink', came the wails of the *zwiḍajani* and a pot of beer was brought to the bush by councillors. Dancing and singing continued till the small hours of the morning, when the sounds of the *zwiḍajani* disappeared in the direction of Maulwi, the burial grove of the dead queens, and the revellers, happy and drunk from beer of the *thugula*, retired to bed. The spirits visit only important members of the royal group and a few other families, but beyond this there are no differences between the harvest giving of the queen and that of other people.

Ritual killings of all kinds are insignificant by contrast with the beer offering. There are, first, killings specially for the ancestors, but they are so rare that many people have never seen them. Secondly, there are occasions when the killings, clearly ritual, are not thought of as an offering or sacrifice, because nothing is given to the ancestors. And, thirdly, there are killings, not associated with ancestors or religion, in which small pieces of meat may nevertheless be set aside to 'tell' (*hu suma*) the gods of some event or to propitiate them. *Hu suma* is a conception somewhat different from our 'offer' or 'give'; it has two connotations as used in ordinary life: it is either merely to inform a superior or, by extension of this idea, to send him a share of something good one has, such as a leg of an animal slaughtered or a calabash of the beer one has brewed. In approaching the gods, sometimes one and sometimes the other conception is uppermost.

The killing which most clearly contains the conception of an offering and the primary purpose of which is propitiation of the gods is the slaughter of a black sheep for rain at the grave of a royal ancestor: the victim is immolated, small pieces of meat cut from all parts of it are set aside for the gods, and all the bones are collected and buried in the grave, together with the stomach contents. Equally stressed, however, is the eating of the meat without salt by the assembled crowd. At the installation of a district head, a beast, referred to as a *thugula*, is killed and, in so far as it is killed in a special manner and morsels of meat set aside for the gods to be cooked and later eaten without salt by children below the age of puberty, it is the vicarious submission of a gift to the ancestors. But the major portion of meat is not ritually eaten nor are the bones collected, for a hind leg is sent to the queen. So little is the 'goat of killing' in marriage ceremonial regarded as an offering or sacrifice that we sought for it in vain in the context of a killing for the ancestors. Yet pieces of meat are laid on the shrine and a prayer offered, though the rest of the meat is not ritually eaten nor are the bones kept. Still further removed from an offering is the goat killed on a death to provide a skin for covering the body: its meat is eaten without salt, and all who partake of it must sleep in the hut of the deceased, but nothing is given to the ancestors and no prayer is offered. On the other hand, though the *lelɔpɔ* doctor, when killing a goat to treat a patient, sets aside pieces of meat